



# County of San Diego

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CHIEF OPERATIONS OFFICER

February 28, 2022

To: Supervisor Nathan Fletcher, Chair  
Supervisor Nora Vargas, Vice-Chair  
Supervisor Joel Anderson  
Supervisor Terra Lawson-Remer  
Supervisor Jim Desmond

From: Nick Macchione, Agency Director  
Health and Human Services Agency

## **180 DAY REPORT BACK: FRAMEWORK FOR OUR FUTURE – DECLARING HEALTH MISINFORMATION A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS**

On August 31, 2021 (19), the San Diego County (County) Board of Supervisors (Board) approved the Framework for Our Future: Declaring Health Misinformation a Public Health Crisis, and adopted Resolution No. 210142, entitled: A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO DECLARING HEALTH MISINFORMATION A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS. Additionally, the Board directed the Chief Administrative Officer to implement strategies cited by the U.S. Surgeon General Vivek H. Murthy in his advisory entitled, “Confronting Health Misinformation,” and to report back within 90 days on the status of the implementation and within 180 days upon completion.

As directed, staff have provided recommendations for objectives, deliverables, activities, completion dates, and leads for the strategies cited by the U.S. Surgeon General’s Advisory to build a local healthy, safe, and thriving information environment. The updates for the implementation plan strategies, objectives, and implementation timelines are listed below.

<b>Strategy A: Devote resources to identify and label health misinformation and disseminate timely health information to counter misinformation that is impeding our ability to keep our communities safe.</b>	
<b>Objective A1</b>	Conduct community-based messaging, that is <b>culturally and linguistically appropriate</b> . This action provides factual health information to dispel myths and misinformation to increase COVID-19 immunization rates.
	<b>Implementation update:</b> Building on prior education campaigns implemented in 2020 and 2021 via a media contract, misinformation was emphasized in the last third quarter of 2021 with County social media and through the Brown Marketing Strategies campaign. This effort was extended into the first quarter of 2022. A new media services contract will be in place in the Spring of 2022 with its messaging strategy utilizing the results from continuing community surveys.



<b>Objective A2</b>	<p>Expand <b>website</b> accessibility and information for combating health misinformation in our community.</p> <p><b>Implementation update:</b> Initiated September 7, 2021, with ongoing updates as needed. Educational information has always been on the website about misinformation. This focus was expanded with the creation of a misinformation webpage presence. Significant changes to the COVID-19 <a href="#">website</a> included the creation of specific webpages on finding credible sources of information, providing claims and facts, addressing frequently asked questions, and posting the COVID-19 Public Health Misinformation Panel telebriefings. See the webpage at: <a href="https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/evaluating-covid-19-information">Evaluating COVID-19 Information (sandiegocounty.gov)</a>.</p> <p>When appropriate, the webpage will be updated in order to continue to expand website accessibility and information to combat health misinformation in San Diego County.</p>
<p><b>Strategy B: Modernize public health communications with investments to better understand gaps in health information, and questions and concerns of the community, especially in hard-to-reach communities. Develop targeted community engagement strategies, including partnerships with trusted messengers.</b></p>	
<b>Objective B1</b>	<p>Host critical conversations in the community, with a focus on <b>high-risk populations</b>, to discuss the importance of vaccinations; perform mixed-methods evaluation of Community Health Worker Communication and Outreach Services to increase understanding of best practices and effective communication methods to diverse San Diego populations.</p> <p><b>Implementation update:</b> Initiated in August 2020, the COVID-19 Community Health Workers (CHWs) Communication and Outreach Services Collaborative is a group of CHWs associated with 14 contracts to conduct outreach and education to high-risk populations. There are approximately 60 participants. This group meets bi-weekly and has met 40 times since the beginning of the contracts to discuss clinical, testing, misinformation, and vaccination updates.</p> <p>Since August 2020, CHWs have had a focused reach of approximately 716,460 high-risk residents. The importance of vaccinations is an ongoing focus at meetings. The evaluation timeline is from September 2020 through September 2021. A full evaluation report will be completed by March 2022.</p> <p>The County will continue to perform mixed-methods evaluation of Community Health Worker Communication and Outreach Services to gain a better understanding of best practices and effective methods needed to communicate to diverse populations in San Diego County.</p>
<b>Objective B2</b>	<p>Dispel myths and misinformation of providers and their staffs by conducting <b>academic detailing</b> with health care providers.</p> <p><b>Implementation update:</b> Misinformation efforts have always been included in academic detailing approach, which began on September 23, 2020. Providers in the lowest healthy places index (HPI) zip codes were prioritized. As of January 16, 2022, 673 healthcare practices in 24 zip codes, including those with census tracts in the lowest HPI, are successfully engaged in academic detailing.</p>



<b>Objective B3</b>	Address misinformation and disseminate information and links to trusted sources via <b>social media platforms</b> .
	<b>Implementation update:</b> Misinformation messaging has been an ongoing component about COVID-19 public education. Working with a local marketing contractor, Twitter and Facebook messaging was developed to specifically address misinformation topics. The County Communications Office used various social media platforms to address misinformation, including promoting misinformation panels and featuring clips of non-county doctors responding to claims made during BOS COVID-19 presentations. This latter effort began in early September 2021 and has continued in the first quarter of 2022. This strategy was modified to focus on results from the third survey, issued in November 2021, with an enhanced focus on boosters and the hesitation among populations that included African Americans and those in the rural communities.
<b>Objective B4</b>	Identify and <b>train trusted community-level spokespersons</b> to communicate the importance of vaccinations and the ramifications COVID-19 cases pose for the community.
	<b>Implementation update:</b> Community outreach and education (COE) contracts, specific to race and ethnic groups, were already in place. The COE partners utilize community health workers (CHW) to conduct outreach and education. Ongoing training and education efforts have been implemented based on the first and second vaccine survey results. A third vaccine survey was completed in November 2021. The results are being used to craft additional messaging for COE partners, focused on misinformation. Also, a CDC community health worker grant focused on building capacity in the COE partner contracts and related organizations, was used to procure a contractor to conduct this work. The contractor is developing a training curriculum that will be implemented in the Fall of 2022 to continue sustained efforts.
<b>Strategy C: Expand our research efforts to better define and understand the sources of health misinformation, document, and trace its negative impacts, and develop strategies to address and counter it across mediums and diverse communities.</b>	
<b>Objective C1</b>	Perform a <b>survey</b> of unvaccinated persons to better understand San Diegan's view of the COVID-19 vaccines.
	<b>Implementation update:</b> The County has conducted three community surveys: the first survey was administered from December 19, 2020, through January 5, 2021; the second survey was administered, from June 13 through June 24, 2021; and the most recent survey was administered, on November 6 – 22, 2021. An additional survey is being considered for Spring 2022, using funding from the CDC Health Disparities grant, to continue to refine messaging and inform CHW training efforts.
<b>Objective C2</b>	Develop comprehensive <b>media campaigns</b> to counter vaccine hesitancy and address local community members' concerns.
	<b>Implementation update:</b> New media campaigns were developed and tailored based on the feedback from the community survey implemented on November 6 – 22, 2021, and continues to be refreshed based on the third survey results, with new education campaign efforts to begin in Spring of 2022. Through the result of ongoing community work, the Somali and refugee population have been identified



	as an area of added focus in order to counter vaccine hesitancy within these communities.
<b>Strategy D: Invest in resilience against health misinformation including digital resources and training for health practitioners and health workers. Explore educational programs to help our communities distinguish evidence-based information from opinion and personal stories.</b>	
<b>Objective D1</b>	<p>Partner with <b>community practitioners</b> in addressing vaccine misinformation/hesitancy and develop messaging.</p> <p><b>Implementation update:</b> Initiated in September 2020, to conduct academic detailing (AD) and contracted outreach and education (COE) efforts. These approaches continue and have incorporated enhanced misinformation messaging. On October 20, 2021, an AD Vaccine Equity Initiative was implemented, in which physician Medical Reserve Corp volunteers contacted practices in zip codes with the lowest vaccination rates to help combat misinformation and hesitancy. As of January 16, 2022, 222 practices have been successfully engaged.</p>
<b>Objective D2</b>	<p>Partner with <b>professional healthcare associations</b> in addressing vaccine misinformation/hesitancy and developing messaging.</p> <p><b>Implementation update:</b> COVID-19 Misinformation Panels with trusted healthcare providers as panelists began, on October 6, 2021, and are conducted monthly, the Wednesday after each COVID-19 Board of Supervisors update. To date, five sessions have been convened, with a video of the panel discussion found on the <a href="https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/evaluating-covid-19-information">Evaluating COVID-19 Information (sandiegocounty.gov)</a>.</p>
<b>Objective D3</b>	<p>Partner with <b>healthcare systems</b> to address vaccine misinformation/hesitancy and developing messaging.</p> <p><b>Implementation update:</b> The County will continue to communicate directly with healthcare providers via telebriefings, emails, e-blast announcements, and professional newsletters to communicate updated resources and misinformation messaging. From August 31, 2021 through January 31, 2022, 11 bi-monthly healthcare sector briefings have been conducted.</p>
<b>Strategy E: Partner with federal, State, territorial, tribal, private, nonprofit, research, and other local entities to identify best practices to stop the spread of health misinformation and develop and implement coordinated recommendations.</b>	
<b>Objective E1</b>	<p>Work with <b>federal and State entities</b> in addressing vaccine misinformation/hesitancy by developing messaging.</p> <p><b>Implementation update:</b> Public Health leadership continues to attend federal, national, and state meetings to gather information and address local level misinformation issues. This will be an ongoing effort.</p>
<b>Objective E2</b>	<p>Identify best practices to stop the spread of health misinformation, in partnerships with <b>tribal health authority and leaders</b>.</p> <p><b>Implementation update:</b> Currently, the County has established relationships and agreements with tribal partners to share testing data and previously established a Tribal Sector to share information. On an ongoing basis, communicating misinformation messaging to these partners.</p>



<b>Objective E3</b>	<p>Develop and implement coordinated <b>health services</b> in partnership with <b>tribal health authority and leaders</b>.</p> <p><b>Implementation update:</b> It is recognized that tribal nations are a sovereign nation and receive funding support directly from the federal government. To coordinate efforts, four agreements were developed, in 2020, for sharing testing data. In 2021, provided vaccination services support to Indian Health Services to vaccinate non-eligible staff and members. There is tribal representation from the medical community on the COVID-19 Vaccine Clinical Advisory Group.</p> <p>The County will continue to coordinate health services and maintain an ongoing partnership with tribal health authority leaders.</p>
<b>Objective E4</b>	<p>Partner with <b>educational institutions and libraries</b> to address vaccine misinformation/ hesitancy and develop messaging.</p> <p><b>Implementation update:</b> An education contract with the San Diego County Office of Education (SDCOE) was executed, on November 2, 2021, and activities will continue through May 2023. SDCOE will provide mini grants to schools to implement a variety of Health Education pilots and sustainability plans. The goal is for students to become critical thinkers and problem solvers when confronting health issues; to navigate basic health information and services; to be effective communicators who organize and convey beliefs, ideas, and information about health issues; and grow into responsible and productive citizens who help ensure that their community is kept healthy, safe, and secure. In addition, the County will continue to provide information to Childcare, TK–12, and Institutions of Higher Education sectors via telebriefings and e-newsletters. On January 19, 2022, County staff met with CIRCUIT libraries (UCSD, SDSU, COSD, SDPL, CSUSM, USD) to discuss ongoing collaboration on addressing misinformation.</p>
<b>Objective E5</b>	<p>Partner with <b>places of worship</b> in addressing vaccine misinformation/hesitancy and developing messaging.</p> <p><b>Implementation update:</b> County continues to communicate via the Faith-Based Organizations sector with community leaders, providing evidence-based guidance via telebriefings and e-newsletters with updated resources and misinformation messaging. The County also offered a free, one-day COVID-19 Safe Practices training to faith-based organizations on February 2, 2022, and 23 participants attended.</p>
<b>Objective E6</b>	<p>Partner with <b>media organizations</b> in addressing vaccine misinformation/ hesitancy and developing messaging.</p> <p><b>Implementation update:</b> Contract for media messaging services continues to be amplified to include health misinformation. A third community survey was launched November 6 – 22, 2021. Results were released in December 2021 and can be found on the County website. The County will continue to partner with media organizations to communicate misinformation messaging. Outreach has resulted in regular media coverage of misinformation panels and virtual public attendance.</p>



<b>Objective E7</b>	Partner with <b>businesses</b> in addressing vaccine misinformation/hesitancy and developing messaging.
	<b>Implementation update:</b> The contract with San Diego Chamber of Commerce for <a href="#">Live Well @ Work</a> began January 3, 2022, and activities will continue through May 2023. This worksite wellness program encourages employees to make healthy lifestyle changes, which supports an employer's bottom line by offering resources and best practices for San Diegans to build better health at work. COVID-19 information and misinformation messaging will be provided to employers participating in Live Well @ Work. In addition, a COVID-19 safety certificate program was developed for employers, in partnership with the Business Sector, to ensure a healthy worksite with a focus on infectious disease prevention and health literacy. Two sessions have been held to date, with 49 participants.
<b>Objective E8</b>	Partner with <b>community sectors</b> in addressing vaccine misinformation and hesitancy by developing messaging.
	<b>Implementation update:</b> Community sector engagement began in early 2020. This approach continues and misinformation messaging is ongoing. Over 20 sectors have been developed. Since August 31, 2021, 61 virtual telebriefings have been convened, with 7,317 participants and nine separate presentations, with 347 participants, have been conducted. The community sectors have also disseminated 158 eblasts to nearly 20,000 recipients during the same period. Targeted messaging about vaccine misinformation has also been conducted with youth and young adults through five Talks with a Doc and a Youth Town Hall, where, collectively, over 100 youth attended.
<b>Objective E9</b>	Participate in the <b>COVID-19 Equity Task Force</b> to ensure underrepresented communities are provided access to information and services.
	<b>Implementation update:</b> County has continued to participate in the community-driven COVID-19 Equity Task Force, which was developed in Fall 2020. Efforts are ongoing.
<b>Strategy F: Identify resource gaps to combating health misinformation and working with state and federal partners to meet ongoing needs.</b>	
<b>Objective F1</b>	Disseminate up-to-date <b>State and federal</b> COVID-19 communications to dispel health misinformation in the community, (e.g., pregnancy and breastfeeding).
	<b>Implementation update:</b> Efforts commenced at the onset of the pandemic and are ongoing.

**Strategy G: Work with the medical community and local partners to develop expansions to a website that will serve as a central resource for combating health misinformation in our community.**


**Objective G1**

**Expand the existing COVID-19 website** to combat health misinformation.

**Implementation update:** The County's website already included misinformation topics. In September 2021, expanded and elevated existing misinformation web-presence to a focused webpage. This webpage now includes videos from the COVID-19 Misinformation Panel, ([Misinformation Review \(sandiegocounty.gov\)](https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/misinformation-review)) conducted in partnership with the local medical community.

If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Wilma Wooten at [moc.pho.hhsa@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:moc.pho.hhsa@sdcounty.ca.gov).

Respectfully,



NICK MACCHIONE, Agency Director  
Health and Human Services Agency

c: Helen N. Robbins-Meyer, Chief Administrative Officer



**COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO  
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
TUESDAY, AUGUST 31, 2021**

**MINUTE ORDER NO. 19**

**SUBJECT: FRAMEWORK FOR OUR FUTURE: DECLARING HEALTH  
MISINFORMATION A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS (DISTRICTS: ALL)**

**OVERVIEW**

The resurging pandemic has led to more infections and hospitalizations than the region has seen since the beginning of the year and ICU capacity is once again being tested. The U.S. Surgeon General has recently warned that health misinformation presents an urgent threat to public health. Therefore, urgent action is needed to curb the spread of the Delta variant by combatting misinformation, thereby supporting our health care system and, in turn, saving lives. There would be a substantial detrimental effect on the County and public if not acted upon immediately. For these reasons, this Board Letter requires immediate action at the next Board meeting.

This Board Letter declares health misinformation to be a public health crisis. At a pivotal time in our history, with an FDA-approved vaccine available to all San Diegans free of charge and booster shots recommended later this year, health misinformation now presents a greater threat to public health than a variant of COVID-19. In response, the Board of Supervisors of the County of San Diego recognizes the vaccine hesitancy, that stands in the way of the County moving beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, is being fueled by the spread of health misinformation, and commits to developing strategies to actively combat health misinformation.

Following the recommendations of the U.S. Surgeon General Vivek H. Murthy in his advisory entitled "Confronting Health Misinformation," this board letter acknowledges the role misinformation has had in the resurgence of COVID-19 infections, once again filling hospital capacity, and driving the deaths and hospitalizations of thousands, including San Diegans and committing County resources to work with trusted stakeholders to aggressively counter misinformation in our community and engage in outreach based on best practices.

We strongly urge your support for the recommendations in this letter to recognize health misinformation as the threat to public health that it is, and take the necessary steps towards a stronger, healthier future.

**RECOMMENDATION(S)**

**CHAIR NATHAN FLETCHER**

1. Approve resolution titled "Resolution of the Board of Supervisors of the County of San Diego Declaring Health Misinformation a Public Health Crisis."
2. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to implement the following strategies cited by the U.S. Surgeon General Vivek H. Murthy in his advisory entitled "Confronting Health Misinformation," and report back within 90 days on the status of implementation and within 180 days upon completion:
  - a. Devote resources to identify and label health misinformation and disseminate timely health information to counter misinformation that is impeding our ability to keep our community safe,



- b. Modernize public health communications with investments to better understand gaps in health information, and questions and concerns of the community, especially in hard-to-reach communities. Develop targeted community engagement strategies, including partnerships with trusted messengers,
- c. Expand our research efforts to better define and understand the sources of health misinformation, document and trace its costs and negative impacts, and develop strategies to address and counter it across mediums and diverse communities,
- d. Invest in resilience against health misinformation including digital resources and training for health practitioners and health workers. Explore educational programs to help our communities distinguish evidence-based information from opinion and personal stories.
- e. Partner with federal, state, territorial, tribal, private, nonprofit, research, and other local entities to identify best practices to stop the spread of health misinformation and develop and implement coordinated recommendations.
- f. Identify resource gaps to combating health misinformation and working with state and federal partners to meet ongoing needs.
- g. Work with the medical community and local partners to develop a website that will serve as a central resource for combating health misinformation in our community.

#### **EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT**

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the lives of individuals, businesses, and communities across San Diego County. Recent studies have found that online misinformation campaigns are associated with a decrease in vaccinations over time, which impacts all communities' ability to reach herd immunity. But, the impacts are greater in ethnic minority communities as a majority of non-white adults were found to be hesitant to receive the Covid-19 vaccine. Studies have found vaccine and healthcare distrust continue to serve as major barriers to addressing racial equity in Covid-19 vaccine efforts. It is believed that developing sustainable and sound strategies to mitigate and combat misinformation, such through the actions proposed in this Board action, is crucial to closing health outcomes gaps within Black and Hispanic communities and achieving overall public health goals.

#### **FISCAL IMPACT**

There is no fiscal impact associated with this action. There may be future fiscal impacts associated with final recommendations which would need to be approved by the Board.

#### **BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT**

N/A

#### **ACTION:**

ON MOTION of Supervisor Fletcher, seconded by Supervisor Vargas, the Board of Supervisors took action as recommended, adopting Resolution No. 21-142, entitled: A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO DECLARING HEALTH MISINFORMATION A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS.

AYES: Vargas, Lawson-Remer, Fletcher

NOES: Anderson, Desmond



State of California)  
County of San Diego)

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a full, true and correct copy of the Original entered in the Minutes of the Board of Supervisors.

ANDREW POTTER  
Clerk of the Board of Supervisors



Signed  
by Andrew Potter

